

Michigan EXPLORE-PLAN Pilot Project 2012

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Introduction

Welcome to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the 2012 Michigan EXPLORE-PLAN Pilot Project. This FAQ will be updated periodically and posted to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) Bureau of Assessment and Accountability (BAA) website www.michigan.gov/baa. This URL also includes the program announcement memorandum, the *District Participation Agreement*, and the *Checklist of Critical Dates for Districts and Schools* that BAA posted on January 13, 2012. Be sure to check in for updates.

1) General

Q1: What benefit do districts and schools receive for participating in the pilot project?

A: Districts and schools who participate will receive free test materials, scoring, and the standard reporting for students in grade 8 who take EXPLORE and students in grade 10 who take PLAN during the testing window: January 1, 2012 through April 13, 2012. BAA will cover the costs assessed by ACT for the eligible students.

Q2: What are the critical dates for this project?

A: Please refer to the *Checklist of Critical Dates for Districts and Schools* posted at www.michigan.gov/baa. The checklist of dates was updated on January 31, 2012.

2) Test Window

Q1: Are there preferred dates within the testing window for EXPLORE and PLAN that we should administer the tests for the pilot?

A: For the 2012 pilot, districts are allowed to test any time within the window (January 1, 2012 through April 13, 2012); however, **BAA would prefer testing take place from March 5, 2012 through April 13, 2012.** That is a six-week window; the first three weeks concurrent with the Michigan Merit Examination (MME) window, and the three weeks following MME. Testing during this preferred window will allow sufficient time to return the District Participation Agreement to BAA and order materials prior to testing.

Q2: Are we allowed to administer the EXPLORE and PLAN tests on the same days we are administering the MME?

A: Yes, as long as EXPLORE and PLAN testing does not interfere with the MME administration (e.g. materials are returned using the proper headers, in the proper envelopes, and shipped to the proper address).

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3) Eligibility

Q1: Which students are eligible to participate in the pilot and when do they have to test?

A: Students enrolled in grades 8 and 10 in Michigan Public Schools or Public School Academies are eligible to participate. Grade 8 students will take EXPLORE. Grade 10 students will take PLAN. For 2012, the test must be administered between January 1 and April 13, however **BAA would prefer testing take place from March 5, 2012 through April 13, 2012.** The district must submit a District Participation Agreement to BAA no later than 11:59 p.m. on February 10, 2012.

Q2: Our district has already tested 8th grade students using EXPLORE and 10th grade students using PLAN. We tested after January 1, 2012, but we've already returned our answer documents to ACT for scoring. Are we still able to participate?

A: Yes, just fill out and return the District Participation Agreement no later than 11:59 p.m. on February 10, 2012. The agreement and other documents can be found at www.michigan.gov/baa. Look under the heading for Michigan EXPLORE-PLAN Pilot Project.

Q3: Our school or district tested students this past fall (prior to January 1, 2012). Are we able to participate?

A: Tests administered prior to January 1, 2012 cannot be included in the pilot project. However, if you would like to retest eligible students this spring to obtain pre- and post-test data for the same school year, you may do so. The state will cover the testing costs for eligible students who retest in the spring. Return a District Participation Agreement to BAA no later than 11:59 p.m. on February 10, 2012. This must be approved before you order your test materials. Follow the ordering process in the "Ordering Test Materials" section of this FAQ. Please note that your school and district aggregate reports received from ACT will include all students twice (once for each administration of the test).

Q4: Our district has never administered the EXPLORE or PLAN in the past. Are we able to participate?

A: Yes, send in the District Participation Agreement as instructed on the form (posted to www.michigan.gov/baa). Once BAA has approved your participation (within 5 business days after receipt of request), you may order test materials – for more details see the "Ordering Test Materials" section of this FAQ.

Q5: Can I also conduct "off-grade testing" (other than 8th or 10th graders)? For example, I want to also test my 9th graders with PLAN in the spring.

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A: Yes, but any testing other than grade 8 for EXPLORE and grade 10 for PLAN will be at the expense of your school or district. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Schools that elect to test non-8th grade students with EXPLORE OR non-10th grade students with PLAN during the spring 2012 assessment window must:

1. Submit separate orders for their off-grade testers, and
2. Return answer documents by assessment and grade using different headers.

For more details, see the “Ordering Test Materials” section of this FAQ.

Q6: Should students that participate in Michigan’s MI-Access be included in the pilot?

A: No, there are no alternate EXPLORE or PLAN test forms available.

Q7: Should students that participate in Michigan’s MEAP-Access be included in the pilot?

A: Yes, please see the “Test Accommodations” section of this FAQ.

4) Participation and the District Participation Agreement

A copy of the District Participation Agreement form can be located at www.michigan.gov/baa.

Q1: Our district hasn’t ordered materials yet. Should we order now and then send in the District Participation Agreement?

A: No, submit your completed District Participation Agreement first. Within five business days of submitting this form, BAA will send you an email confirming your participation in the pilot. Please wait five business days from the time you receive the confirmation before placing your materials order. This will allow time for the correct payment option to be added to ACT’s ordering system for your district. For more details, see the “Ordering Test Materials” section of this FAQ.

Q2: If our district or school does not participate this year, can we still participate next year (spring 2013)?

A: Yes. A 2013 District Participation Agreement will be available next year; do not complete the 2012 District Participation Agreement if you do not intend to participate this year.

Q3: If we participate this year, do we have to participate next year?

A: No, but you are encouraged to do so.

Q4: Who must approve the District Participation Agreement before I submit the form to BAA?

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A: Your district superintendent or authorized designee must approve and sign the District Participation Agreement before the form can be submitted to BAA.

Q5: Where do I submit the District Participation Agreement?

A: Submit the District Participation Agreement via email to BAA@Michigan.gov or FAX to 517-335-1186, no later than 11:59 p.m. on February 10, 2012.

Q6: What is the deadline for submitting the District Participation Agreement?

A: No later than 11:59 p.m. on February 10, 2012.

Q7: What if I submit my District Participation Agreement to BAA after February 10, 2012?

A: Your school or district will not be eligible to participate in the pilot program in 2012; however, you could still elect to participate in 2013.

Q8: How will I know if BAA has approved my District Participation Agreement?

A: Within 5 business days from receipt of your agreement, BAA will send an email confirmation and approval to your District Superintendent and Building Principal as shown in the Educational Entity Master (EEM).

5) Ordering Test Materials (See subsection 5.4 for a link to step-by-step ordering instructions)

This section is divided into these subsections:

- 5.1 General ordering questions
- 5.2 Already ordered and received materials
- 5.3 Already ordered but haven't received materials yet
- 5.4 Haven't ordered materials yet – need to order – I have an ACT account
- 5.5 Haven't ordered materials yet – need to order – I need to set up an ACT account
- 5.6 ISD orders

5.1) General Ordering Questions

Q1: Must we place a district order, or can each school order for themselves?

A: **You are strongly encouraged to have your district place a district order for all schools in the district.** The benefit of your district ordering is that your district will automatically receive aggregate reports that include data for each school in your district.

Q2: If I place my order from the district, where will the materials be shipped - to the district or to the schools?

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A: ACT will ship test materials to the organization selected in the order. The ordering entity can have materials shipped to the school or district. BAA recommends shipping materials directly to the schools for this pilot.

Q3: If I place my order from the district, where will the school-level reports be shipped - to the district or to the schools?

A: ACT will ship school level reports (including student reports) to the organization selected in the order. The ordering entity can have school level reports shipped to the school or district. BAA recommends shipping school level reports directly to the schools for this pilot.

Q4: We're planning on participating in the project next year as well. Should we order materials for next year when we place our order for this year?

A: No. You should order materials only for students who will test this year.

Q5: When ordering materials, do I need to include an overage amount?

A: No, ACT automatically includes overages based on the amount of standard time test materials ordered for each school (at the time the district or school places the order). For accommodated materials, no overages are applied.

ACT will include an overage of test materials for the following items:

- Test Booklet
 - Answer Folder
 - Instructions for Completing Your Answer Folder
 - Why Take EXPLORE? / Why Take PLAN?
-

5.2) Already ordered and received EXPLORE and PLAN test materials

Q1: Our school or district ordered materials for 8th grade students in EXPLORE and/or 10th grade students in PLAN before we learned of this pilot, I have already received these test materials. Do I need to return these materials and reorder?

A: No. The materials already in your possession can be used for this pilot project. You must still return a District Participation Agreement no later than 11:59 p.m. on February 10, 2012. Please also be sure to follow the instructions provided later in this FAQ in the "Test Materials and Test Materials Return".

5.3) Already ordered EXPLORE and PLAN test materials, but haven't received them yet

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Q1: Our school or district ordered materials for 8th grade students in EXPLORE and/or 10th grade students in PLAN before we learned of this pilot, but I have not received the materials yet. Can I use these national EXPLORE/PLAN materials for this pilot?

A: Yes. The national materials you've ordered can be used for this pilot project. You must still return a District Participation Agreement no later than 11:59 p.m. on February 10, 2012. Please also be sure to follow the instructions provided later in this FAQ in the "Test Materials and Test Materials Return".

5.4) Haven't ordered materials yet – need to order – I have an ACT account

Q1: How do I order test materials?

A: Before you can order test materials, you must:

- 1) Submit the District Participation Agreement to BAA no later than 11:59 p.m. on February 10, 2012. Please wait to receive your confirmation that your signed agreement has been received by BAA before you order. You should receive confirmation from BAA within 5 days of form submission.
- 2) Wait five business days from receipt of BAA's email confirmation to place your order. This will allow the EXPLORE/PLAN ordering system to be loaded with the correct payment option for your district.
- 3) Reference the step-by-step ordering guide for additional details. The guide can be accessed on the main BAA webpage (www.michigan.gov/baa) or at the following link: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Ordering_Test_Materials_for_MI_EXPLORE-PLAN_Ordering_Instructions_01-30-12_376068_7.pdf

If you have questions about ordering, contact ACT Customer Services at CustomerServices@act.org or 1-877-789-2925.

5.5) Haven't ordered materials yet – need to order – I need to set up an ACT account

Q1: How do I set up an account so I can order test materials?

A: Before you can order test materials, you must:

- 1) Submit the District Participation Agreement to BAA no later than 11:59 p.m. on February 10, 2012. BAA must provide approval before you may order. You should receive a confirmation from BAA within 5 days of form submission.
- 2) Create an account. Go to www.act.org/education/order, then click "Create Account" and follow the instructions.

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If you have questions about ordering, contact ACT Customer Services at CustomerServices@act.org or 1-877-789-2925.

5.6) ISD Orders

Q1: Our ISD orders and pays for the EXPLORE and PLAN tests we administer. How can we participate?

A: An answer will be provided at a later date.

6) Pre-ID Labels

Q1: Are Pre-ID labels required for this pilot?

A: No. BAA is not requiring pre-ID labels for this pilot in 2012. It is up to your district or school whether you want to use pre-ID labels; however, it is always a good idea to pre-identify students. For more information on pre-ID labels, go to: <http://www.act.org/education/order/preid/index.html>.

Q2: Are there benefits to using pre-ID labels for this pilot?

A: Yes. Pre-identifying students for this pilot will help ensure students are accurately identified and only eligible students are tested. Using pre-ID labels increases the accuracy of student demographics and reduces administration time because each student no longer needs to grid his/her own answer document with information already contained in the pre-ID label. The pre-ID service is available at no charge.

For consistency, BAA is requesting that the Entity Code (the five-digit number assigned to the school in the Educational Entity Master) is added to the Pre-ID Record Layout as User Defined Field 1, and the student's Unique Identification Code (UIC) is added to the Pre-ID Record Layout as User Defined Field 2. The pre-ID file template can be downloaded at: <http://www.act.org/education/order/preid/index.html>.

Q3: What if my district or school chooses not to use pre-ID labels for this pilot?

A: If pre-ID labels are not used for this pilot, it is imperative that students are instructed to manually grid their answer documents, including their UIC (Block H for EXPLORE; Block D for PLAN).

Q4: If my district or school chooses to use pre-ID labels, when must I have pre-ID completed?

A: You must place an order for test materials before you can pre-ID, and pre-ID label orders must be placed by March 16, 2012. Pre-ID labels are generally shipped within 15 business days (excluding ACT holidays) after ACT receives a validated, encrypted file from the ordering entity; therefore, March 16th is

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the last date to order pre-ID labels to ensure you receive your labels in time to complete testing by the end of the testing window (4/13). Pre-ID labels are mailed in a separate shipment from test materials.

Q5: How long does it take to receive Pre-ID labels?

A: Pre-ID labels are generally shipped within 15 business days (excluding ACT holidays) after ACT receives a validated, encrypted file from the ordering entity. March 16, 2012 is the last date to order pre-ID labels to ensure you receive your labels in time to complete testing by the end of the testing window (4/13).

Q6: Where can I find more information about Pre-ID labels?

A: <http://www.act.org/education/order/preid/index.html>.

Q7: Can I place a Pre-ID label order before placing a test materials order?

A: No, a test materials order must be placed first.

Q8: Will I receive test materials and Pre-ID labels in the same shipment?

A: No, test materials and Pre-ID labels are mailed separately.

7) Test Accommodations

Q1: The EXPLORE-PLAN 2012 District Participation Agreement indicates that students with disabilities should be tested if their IEP indicates it is appropriate. Does this mean every IEP Team must be reconvened and all students with disabilities included?

A: Administration of EXPLORE and PLAN tests with special accommodations is entirely at the discretion of school personnel. ACT recommends accommodated administrations only for students with current documented disabilities and those who have been professionally diagnosed as physically or learning disabled such that they cannot test under standard conditions. Schools should provide accommodations consistent with school IEP or 504 documentation/guidelines.

A student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team should not need to be reconvened in most circumstances. If a student's IEP indicates that he or she is able to participate in the state's general assessments (MEAP or MME) with or without accommodations, then the student should be permitted to participate in the EXPLORE-PLAN pilot. The student's participation should be documented, a parent/guardian notified, and ACT contacted for more information on permissible accommodations.

To participate in the pilot, it may be appropriate to convene a student's IEP Team if he or she participates in the state's alternate assessment known as MEAP-Access. Since MEAP-Access is based on

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grade level content, which the student should also be receiving in the classroom, he or she should not automatically be precluded from participating in the pilot. Students eligible to participate in MEAP-Access may be able to participate in the pilot with accommodations if determined appropriate by the IEP Team. Following the IEP amendment process in this case is acceptable in lieu of convening the entire IEP Team.

MI-Access, the state's other alternate assessment is based on alternate content and achievement standards and there is no alternate EXPLORE or PLAN test available. Therefore, students that participate in MI-Access should not be included in this pilot.

8) Test Materials and Test Materials Return

Q1: What is the deadline for returning answer documents to ACT for scoring?

A: To be funded under the pilot, answer documents must be received at ACT by April 20, 2012. ACT recommends schools ship answer documents no later than April 16, 2012. Materials received at ACT after April 20, 2012, will not be included in the project, and all scoring costs will be the responsibility of the district or school.

Q2: Do I need to pay for returning test materials to ACT?

A: No, ACT provides prepaid traceable envelopes or polymailers in which to return materials. However, if expedited or overnight shipping is needed because a school or district did not ship materials by April 16, 2012, the cost of the expedited shipping to ensure materials arrive at ACT by April 20, 2012 is the responsibility of the school district.

Q3: Do I have to do anything special with the EXPLORE grade 8 and PLAN grade 10 answer documents that qualify for the pilot project before I ship them for scoring?

A: ACT provides two site header sheets per order. Verify the correct grade is indicated in the header sheet (grade 8 for EXPLORE and grade 10 for PLAN). This is especially important if your school is administering the assessment at your own expense to grade levels not included in the pilot. For correct reporting, and to avoid billing to your district or school, it is critical that you separate grades under separate headers. For example, if you are administering EXPLORE for students in grades 8 and 9, batch all grade 8 documents under a header labeled "grade 8" and all grade 9 documents under a separate header labeled "grade 9."

Package test materials according to the instructions provided in the Test Supervisor's manual.

Q4: What test materials should I expect to receive when I order?

A: Information about test materials can be located at <http://www.act.org/explore/materials.html> for EXPLORE and <http://www.act.org/plan/materials.html> for PLAN.

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Q5: How do I know when the test materials I ordered have shipped?

A: ACT's system automatically generates an email confirming the shipment has been sent. This e-mail is sent to the materials "ship to" contact selected in the order. This e-mail will include a link to test materials tracking information.

9) Reporting

Q1: Will the pilot test results be provided to the State of Michigan?

A: Yes, for research purposes only. This data will assist the state in the development of data-based models to support local districts in implementing portions of the education reform legislation. This pilot project is voluntary; therefore, the data will not be used for any federal or state accountability or ranking purposes.

Q2: When will we receive reports?

A: Results for schools (student and school reports) are usually shipped 10 business days (excluding ACT holidays) after the answer documents are received at ACT. Results for districts are usually shipped 20 business days (excluding ACT holidays) after the district reports are first generated. More details about reporting will be provided at a later date.

Q3: What reports will schools and districts receive?

A: Information about EXPLORE and PLAN reports – including sample reports – can be located at <http://www.act.org/explore/downloads.html> for EXPLORE and <http://www.act.org/plan/downloads.html> for PLAN.

Q4: Where are student and school reports shipped?

A: Student and school reports are shipped to the "school reports ship to" contact selected in the order. ACT recommends shipping reports directly to the school contact, although the district can choose to ship reports to the district. If materials are shipped to the district, the district will be responsible for distributing reports to schools in a timely manner and at the district's expense.

Q5: Where are district reports shipped?

A: Student and school reports are shipped to the "districts reports ship to" contact selected in the order.

Q6: In what format are school and district reports provided?

A: Schools and districts receive paper reports, except for the student data file (provided on CD).

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10) Assistance and Upcoming Events

Q1: Who do I contact with questions?

A: Contact BAA for questions about eligibility, participation (including questions about the District Participation Agreement Form), and program policy at BAA@michigan.gov or 1-877-560-8378.

Contact ACT for questions about test materials ordering and user account setup at 1-877-789-2925 or CustomerServices@act.org.

Q2: Will ACT or other organizations be providing any further assistance with this project?

A. Yes, there are a variety of upcoming events where this pilot will be discussed:

-- ACT maintains a full-time employee in Michigan, dedicated solely to assisting Michigan educators with their college-readiness planning. John Carroll has maintained an office in Lansing since 2006 and provides valuable assistance to our schools, districts, intermediate school districts (ISDs), and regional education service agencies (RESAs). Most of his time is spent in our schools helping faculty and staff maximize their assessment data to improve college and career readiness. He is best reached at john.carroll@act.org

-- The ACT State Organization Conference is **February 1, 2012** in Lansing. The conference features users of EXPLORE/PLAN who share their best practices. The final general session will deal exclusively with this pilot. Go to <http://www.act.org/midwest/pdf/michiganagenda.pdf> to access the event brochure and get registration information.

-- The Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) and ACT will be discussing this pilot at the Mid-Winter Summit for Assistant Principals **February 6-7, 2012** at Soaring Eagle Resort. For more information and registration, go to <http://www.mymassp.com/eventlist>.

-- MASSP will be conducting the *EXPLORE/PLAN Workshop for School Improvement* **February 23, 2012** at the MELG building in Lansing. For more information and registration, go to <http://www.mymassp.com/eventlist>.

-- MASSP, ACT, and the Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association (MEMSPA) are jointly sponsoring an EXPLORE Summit **February 29, 2012** in Lansing and **May 10, 2012** in Mt. Pleasant. For more information and registration, go to <http://www.mymassp.com/eventlist>.

11) Miscellaneous

Q1: Will anything about the pilot change for next year?

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A: At the present time, ACT and BAA plan to restrict the 2013 pilot administration to the three weeks of the MME window and the three weeks following. So, the 2013 pilot test administration window would run from March 5, 2013 through April 12, 2013.

Details about the 2013 pilot administration will be provided later in the year.

Q2: My school is participating in the MASSP Digitized Assessment Pilot (the “Clicker Pilot”) this spring, as well as the EXPLORE-PLAN pilot project. Is there any overlap between the two pilots?

A: There are two pilot projects being conducted in Michigan at this time: the EXPLORE-PLAN pilot sponsored by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), and the Digitized Assessment Pilot sponsored by the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP). Each pilot is separate, but there is overlap in the 8th grade. For schools participating in both pilot projects, please use the chart below to better understand the differences between the pilots and where they overlap.

Grade	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th
Michigan EXPLORE-PLAN Pilot Project	Not offered	MDE pays for EXPLORE test only. Must have submitted a DPA by Feb 10, 2012 and must order materials from ACT by March 16 th (if using pre-ID labels), or March 30 th (if not using pre-ID labels). Sign up is for pencil-and-paper option only.	Not offered	MDE pays for PLAN test only. Must have submitted a DPA by Feb 10, 2012 and must order materials from ACT by March 16 th (if using pre-ID labels), or March 30 th (if not using pre-ID labels). Sign up is for pencil-and-paper option only.
MASSP Digitized Assessment Pilot – “Clicker Pilot”	MDE, MASSP, and Turning Technologies provides clickers for students to use as the answer document for the EXPLORE test only. The EXPLORE test must be the current national test purchased from and scored by ACT.			Not offered

Resources for the Pilot Projects:

MASSP Digitized Assessment Pilot – “Clicker Pilot”
Project Announcement http://www.mymassp.com/content/act_explore_clicker_pilot_assessment_goes_digital
Frequently Asked Questions – http://www.mymassp.com/files/Pilot_FAQs.pdf
Purpose and Procedures – http://www.mymassp.com/files/Pilot_Procedures.pdf

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Project Announcement – http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Project_Announcement_373743_7.pdf
2012 District Participation Agreement (DPA) http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/District_Participation_Agreement_373744_7.pdf
Checklist of Critical Dates for Districts & Schools http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Checklist_of_Critical_Dates_for_Districts_and_Schools_373745_7.pdf
Frequently Asked Questions – http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/EXPLORE_PLAN_FAQ_374461_7.pdf

Questions on the Pilot Projects?

For questions about the “Clicker Pilot”, please contact Dave Chiszar at Turning Technologies at 847-331-0865 or pilot@turningtechnologies.com.

For questions about the EXPLORE/PLAN pilot ordering materials, administering EXPLORE or PLAN, or other questions about these assessments, please contact ACT Customer Services at 1-877-789-2925 or CustomerServices@act.org.

For all other questions about the EXPLORE/PLAN pilot, please contact BAA at 1-877-560-8378, option 7, or baa@michigan.gov.